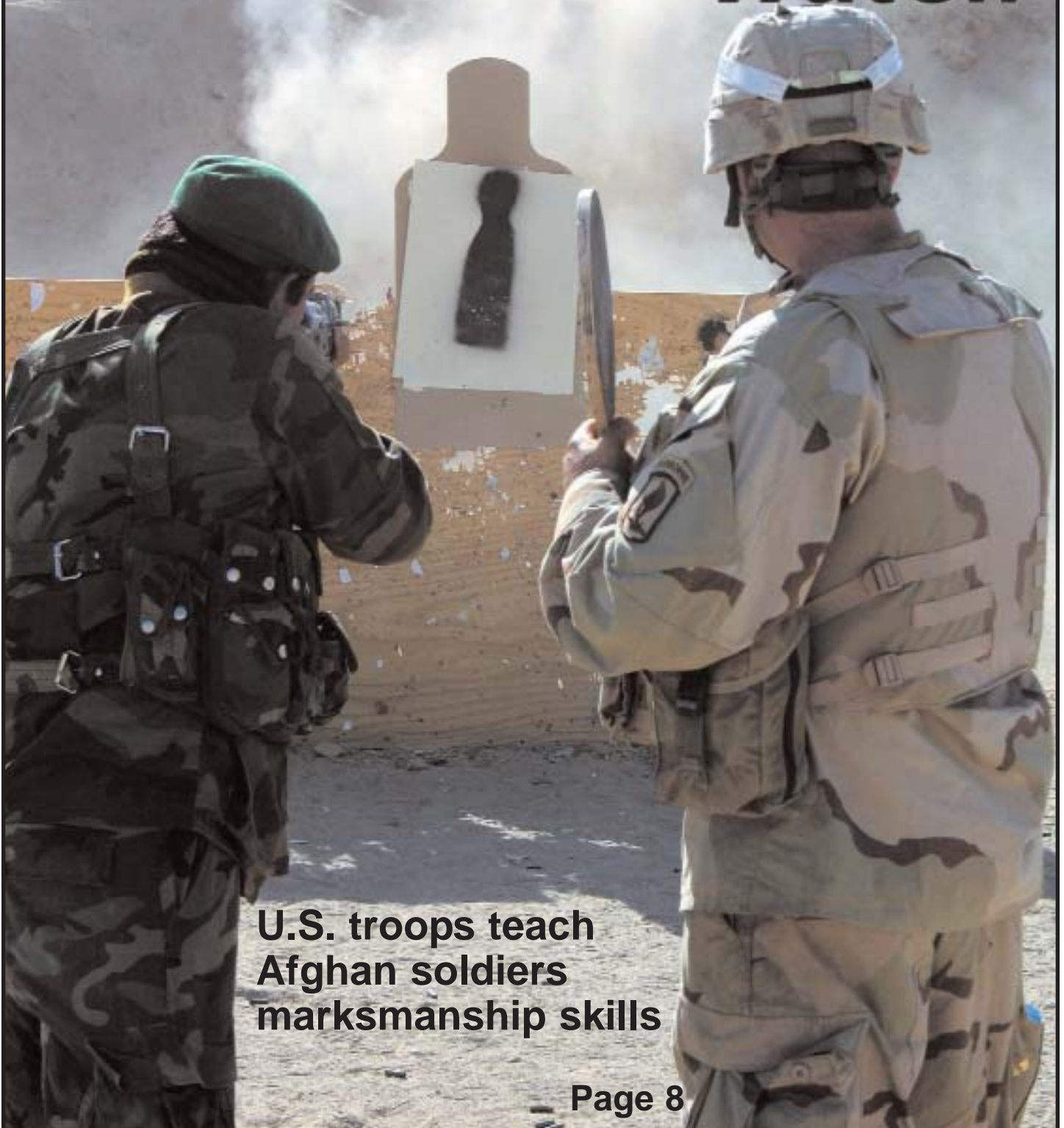


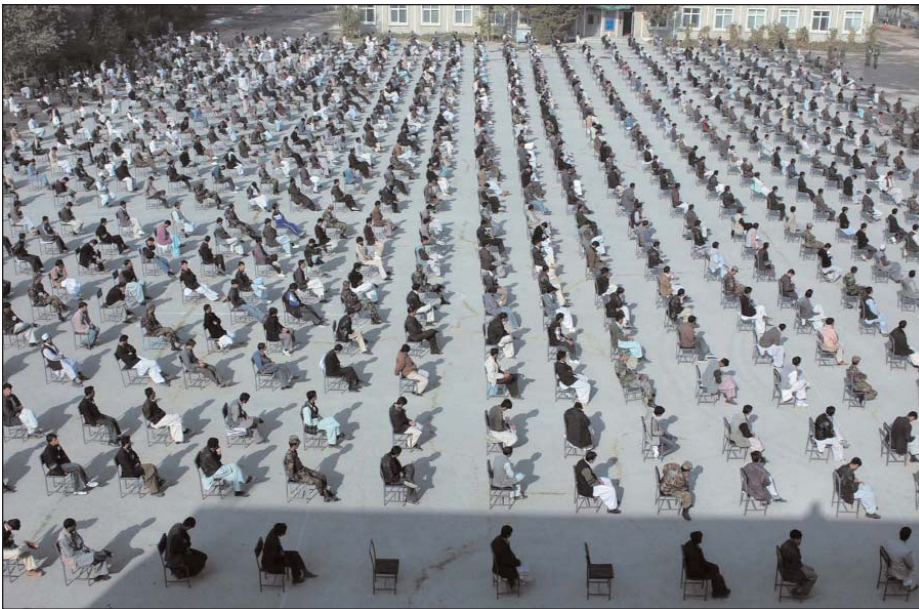
# Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

December 5, 2005



**U.S. troops teach  
Afghan soldiers  
marksmanship skills**





**More than 1,000 men from across Afghanistan prepare to take a written test as part of an entrance exam for the National Military Academy of Afghanistan. The academy will select 250 men to attend its cadet course in February.**

**For more on the ANA Academy exams, see page 4.**

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Matthew Bates  
Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan  
Public Affairs

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**(Cover) Army Sgt. Matthew Delacruz, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, acts as a range safety and gives instruction to an Afghan National Army soldier Nov. 18 at Kandahar Airfield.**

Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell  
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs



## Afghanistan **Freedom** Watch

*Freedom Watch* is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander: Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry  
Public Affairs Officer: Col. James R. Yonke

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# How to avoid cold weather injuries

**By Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio**  
20th Public Affairs Detachment

## **BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -**

As cold weather conditions return to Afghanistan, the knowledge for preventing cold-weather injuries must increase.

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development Web site, last year, Afghanistan's record snowfall and severe weather conditions significantly affected the lives and livelihood of everyone in Afghanistan.

This year's winter could see more of the same severe conditions, so leaders need to do their part to help prevent cold-weather injuries, said Army Dr. (Maj.) Mark A. Ireland, force health protection chief for Combined Joint Task Force-76 surgeon cell.

"It is the commander's and noncommissioned officer's responsibility to prevent cold weather injuries," Ireland said. "Commanders and NCOs should use cold-weather risk management."

According to the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, the following five steps of risk management should be applied to protect the force against cold weather injuries:

### **Identify the hazards**

Cold-weather hazards include temperature, humidity and wind, Ireland said.

"The type of injury depends upon the degree of cold to which the body is

exposed, the duration of the exposure, and the environmental factors responsible for injuring the body," he said.

### **Assess the hazards**

Cold injuries can occur at nonfreezing and at freezing temperatures, Ireland said.

"A cold injury is defined as a tissue injury produced by exposure to cold," he said.

A nonfreezing cold injury is associated with exposure to water and cold.

Three nonfreezing cold weather injuries are chilblain, immersion foot and trench foot.

Chilblain, an inflammation followed by itchy irritation, is caused by above freezing cold humidity, Ireland said. Immersion foot, which is not limited to the feet, is a result of prolonged exposure to water at temperatures usually below 50 degrees.

Trench foot is a result of prolonged exposure to cold, and usually wetness, at temperatures just about freezing.

Hypothermia is a condition caused by prolonged cold exposure and body heat loss, and frostbite is an injury caused by freezing.

To prevent these, control measures should be taken, he said.

### **Control the hazards**

COLD is an acronym often used to help service members prevent cold-weather injuries, Ireland said.

-- Keep it... Clean

-- Avoid... Overheating

-- Wear it... Loose in layers

-- Keep it... Dry

COLD will help to prevent all the cold injuries that can occur at nonfreezing and at freezing temperatures, he said.

Seeking shelter and using the proper cold-weather equipment are a few other ways to control the hazards.

### **Implementing the controls**

CJTf-76 policy on preventing cold weather injuries follows the policies found in the Technical Bulletin Med 508, Army regulation 40-5, Field Manual 4-25.15, Ireland said.

The bulletin specifically states that for implementing controls, Soldiers -- including newly arrived Soldiers -- will be educated about hazards and controls.

It also states that the buddy system will be implemented to check clothes and personal protection, which leads to the last step for risk management.

### **Supervise and evaluate**

Spot checks of clothes, personal protection and hydration should be done frequently, Ireland said.

Cold weather training, winter attire and risk management can protect the force against cold weather injuries, Ireland said.

Implementing these control measures for preventing cold-weather injuries will, "maintain unit readiness and combat-mission effectiveness," Ireland said.

## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



**Air Force Senior Airmen Alex Cohen (right), and Anthony Nuno, response-force members with the 451st Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, provide overwatch protection along the perimeter at Kandahar Airfield.**

*Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs*

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to [freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil](mailto:freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil).

Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

**Correction:** Last week's Photo from the Field submission was erroneously attributed to Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio. The true photographer was Army 1st Sgt. Jon Martin, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment.

Also, the UH-60 Black Hawks were en-route to Kabul International Airport, not Kandahar International Airport as originally reported.



# Afghan National Army academy holds cadet entrance exams

**By Air Force Staff Sgt.**

**Matthew Bates**

**Office of Security Cooperation-  
Afghanistan Public Affairs**

**Kabul, Afghanistan** - As the Afghan National Army continues to grow as a capable and credible fighting force, the need for trained and educated officers to lead it also increases. To find these officers, the National Military Academy of Afghanistan held a cadet entrance exam Nov. 7 to 10.

More than 1,000 Afghan men traveled to Kabul from as far south as Kandahar, as far west as Herat and as far north as Nuristan to take the exam. Some were barefoot, some in short sleeves, others in dress slacks and silk shirts.

Whatever his attire, each young man had one thing in common - a strong desire to join the NMAA and become an officer in their country's national army.

The exam evaluated each applicant's physical fitness and physical health and

tested his knowledge of general school subjects such as math and reading comprehension. The exam was conducted to determine which men will be selected to attend the NMAA cadet course in February, its second class since officially opening this past February.

Cadets attend the academy for four years and, once they graduate, are commissioned as second lieutenants in the Afghan National Army.

"For Afghanistan, I would die," said Ahmad Mirwize, a 23-year-old from the country's Paktya Province.

Mirwize's sentiments mirrored those of the others on hand to take the exam. Aside from offering a chance at a steady paycheck, regular meals and relatively modern accommodations, the academy offers these young men the chance to show their national pride and love for their country as part of its military.

However, Mirwize and the others only have about a 25 percent chance of realizing this dream. Of the more than 1,000

men who showed up to take part in the entrance exam, the academy will only choose 250 to attend the officer school.

To determine who would be selected, the academy organized a variety of physical and mental challenges designed to identify which applicants would make good officers in the ANA.

The challenges were split into two days, with the first consisting of inprocessing and the completion of a physical fitness exam.

On the second day, the applicants took a college entrance exam.

As each applicant arrived on the academy's grounds, he was inprocessed and given a number that became his identity for the next several days. Then, applicants underwent a short interview with an NMAA officer who asked 10 "yes" or "no" questions ranging from "Are you married?" to "Have you ever been in trouble with the law?" to "Are you willing to dedicate 10 years to the Afghan National

**See Exams, next page**



## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week

### Afghan cultural tidbit

**Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:**

**What time is it?**

**Dari**

**Sa-at chand ast?**

**(Sah-aht chand ahst)**

**Pashtu**

**So bajay da**

**(So bahjay-dah)**

Afghan music, once banned by the Taliban but readily available on tape in Afghan communities in the United States, is very popular. Both genders dance the atan, a national dance in which dancers with arms raised twist from side to side at the waist as they step in a slow, rhythmic pattern around a circle.

### From Exams, previous page

Army once you graduate?"

If an applicant answered each question with the appropriate response, he then wrote sentences in Dari to show that he was able to read and write effectively.

As applicants were inprocessed and passed the initial interview process, they were grouped together and given a briefing about what to expect during the course of the physical-fitness test and their time at the NMAA. When this briefing was over, the group went to a soccer field and performed various stretching exercises.

The applicants next moved to the first stage of the physical exam - the push-up station. Here, eight men at a time performed as many push-ups as they could. To ensure the Afghans performed each push-up correctly, a U.S. or Coalition military representative counted and recorded each applicant's number of push-ups.

"We're holding them accountable to consistent military standards during all of these events," said Army Maj. James Camel, of the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan's NMAA Implementation Team. "So, just like in our boot camps and officer schools, if they don't do something right, we don't count it."

If an Afghan had trouble understanding how to correctly perform the exercise, the military member at his station would

demonstrate the proper form to him, ensuring each participant was held to the same standard.

Once an applicant completed the push-up section, his score was recorded and he proceeded to the shuttle-run course. Here, he was required to run 300 meters as fast as possible in 50-meter increments. He ran 50 meters, touched a line on the ground, ran back to where he started, touched the line, and continued until he completed 300 meters. A U.S. or Coalition military advisor then recorded each applicant's time and ensured he ran the course appropriately.

The final portion of the physical exam consisted of a pull-up station where each Afghan performed as many dead-hang pull-ups as he could.

"Through it all, they all had smiles," said Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Bradbury, one of the U.S. advisers from OSC-A who helped with the event. "But for many of them, this was the first time they've ever done anything like push-ups or pull-ups, or sprinted 300 meters. But they're all here because they want to be, not because someone told them to, and that says a lot."

On the second day of the exam, the applicants were required to complete a three-hour written test while sitting in an open courtyard. More than 1,000 men took the test, marking an historic event in the progression of the nation.

"This is a really big step for the academy and for the ANA as a whole," said Army Lt. Col. Paul Lally, deputy team chief of the NMAA Implementation Team. "The training these men will receive here at the academy they'll be able to take with them and use it to contribute to a military that will be disciplined, efficient and effective."

The NMAA will select the top 250 applicants based on a point system. Each applicant's score from his physical-fitness exam will account for 20 percent of his final score, while the points earned from the college entrance exam account for 80 percent. By combining these scores, the NMAA hopes to choose the best qualified candidates to attend the officer school.

"The entire process was a great display of teamwork between the Afghan staff and faculty and the Coalition advisory teams," said Army Col. Dean Stodter, team chief of the NMAA Implementation Team.

Those selected to attend the academy will be notified soon.

Hoping to trade their bare feet, silk shirts and traditional Afghan attire for ANA uniforms, the men who took the NMAA's entrance exam demonstrated that the spirit of Afghanistan is very much alive and that its people are not only glad to witness change, but very much want to be a part of it.

## Enduring Voices

### What's your favorite holiday tradition?



**Army Staff Sgt.  
Jason Arnold,  
490th Civil Affairs Bn.**

*"We'll sit around after eating and talk about funny things we did at Christmas as kids."*



**German Army Lt. Col.  
Manfred Latussek,  
German Liaison Command**

*"It is a German Christmas tradition for children to put their boots by the windowsill the night before St. Nicholas Day (Dec. 6)."*



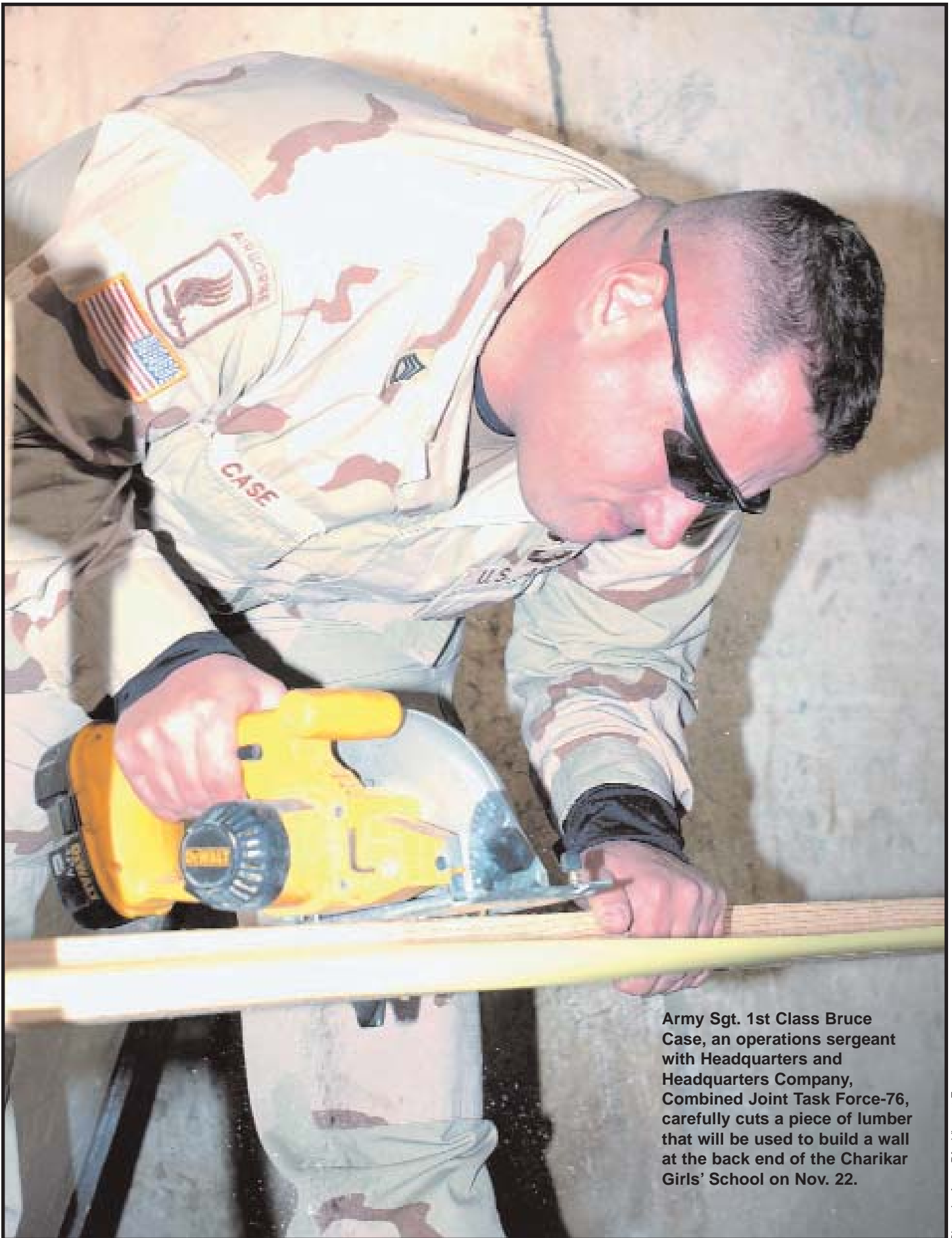
**Army Sgt. Jason Spies,  
690th Military Police Co.**

*"Tormenting the younger kids and finding the presents my wife hides."*



**Air Force Airman 1st Class,  
Jason Pritchett,  
455th Expeditionary  
Security Force Squadron**

*"Putting up Christmas lights, then standing back and seeing the work you did."*



Army Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Case, an operations sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combined Joint Task Force-76, carefully cuts a piece of lumber that will be used to build a wall at the back end of the Charikar Girls' School on Nov. 22.



# Headquarters Soldiers lend helping hand to girls' school in Charikar

**By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco**  
**20th Public Affairs Detachment**

**PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan** - The Soldiers of Headquarters Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combined Joint Task Force-76 worked their grassroots know-how to give love and care to a girls' school in the town of Charikar on Nov. 22.

"We adopted this (project) from the 25th Infantry (in February) Division when they left," said Army Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Case, an HHC opera-

tions sergeant from Chicago. "We've been coming here ever since."

The school and a Red Cross orphanage also under the care of HHC are visited periodically by HHC CJTF-76.

"In May, we checked out the school, (and) talked to the people at the orphanage," said Army Capt. Tim Benedict, HHC executive officer, from Murfreesboro, Tenn. "A week later, we came back and gave the kids school supplies, toys and stuff."

On their recent, fifth visit, Benedict, Case and their Soldiers brought hand and portable power tools to the

school, and pooled their funds to purchase lumber from a local wood shop.

They brought the lumber back to the school to perform renovations: a small back wall, a new front door and a storm door on the roof.

In addition to the lumber, the unit also donated bags of cement purchased on the economy. While the unit did not prepare the mix for the school, they hope the residents will fix the broken stone wall around the school with it.

"Hopefully they can patch this wall up," said Case. "It's ready-mix, and it's supposed to last for seven years."

Abdul Rauf, a principal of the school, expressed his gratitude to the Soldiers as they worked to build the new walls and patch up the old ones.

"We certainly appreciate their help," said Rauf. "Those are very well-respected jobs they're doing."

The Soldiers also gave out school supplies donated by CJTF-76 Information Operations, said Case. All other materials donated by HHC in the past, however, came from the Soldiers, and their friends and family.

"Passing out the gifts to the children was very exciting,"

**See School, page 10**



Army Staff Sgts. Jason Waller, (left) and William Ricks, work on a storm door for the roof of a girls' school in Charikar.



Army Staff Sgt. Nicholas Gaytangarner, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, shows a group of Afghan National Army soldiers a paper target that was fired at with an AK-47 at Kandahar Airfield.



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell

**By Ar  
Task F**

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# Right on target

## Coalition Soldiers teach Afghan soldiers marksmanship skills

**Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell**  
**Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

**DAHAR, Afghanistan** - Soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade helped teach the marksmanship skills of the Afghan National Army soldiers during a training mission at Atal Wali Nov. 12 to 19 at Atal Wali Airfield. Soldiers from B Company, 1st Battalion, 10th Airborne Parachute Infantry Regiment, along with Romanian and other Coalition soldiers took the lead in teaching Afghan soldiers from the 1st Kandak, 2nd Brigade, the basics of marksmanship. "We split it up into three phases," said 1st Lt. Eric Nelson, 2nd Platoon leader and officer-in-charge of the range. "The first phase was pre-marksmanship instruction. We taught them much the same as what our privates get taught in training. We taught them the four fundamentals of marksmanship using the same techniques like the dime

and washer drills, the shadow box, and blocks of instruction."

"Then we went on to the second phase ... zeroing -- which was something new for them," said Nelson. "We had a lot of help from our international allies, especially the Romanian Black Wolf battalion that is here (at KAF)."

"Then we went into the third phase which was our close-quarters marksmanship classes," said Nelson.

On Nov. 18, the 'Sky Soldiers' ended the day's exercises with a demonstration for the ANA soldiers, showing the effectiveness of firing two-round controlled pairs versus firing a spray of bullets in full automatic mode.

"Now they understand that they control their ammo, they control their posture, and when they fire they know they will hit the target," said Army Staff Sgt. Edward King, marksmanship instructor. "Everyone knows that in full auto you kind of spray

**See Sky, page 10**





**From Sky, page 9**

and slay in every direction, and you really can't tell where the bullets are going."

"This gives them an idea of what it's like to shoot controlled pairs versus full auto and understand that they are more likely to hit the enemy or the Taliban," King added.

King believes the message hit home when the ANA soldiers saw the paper-target silhouettes after the demonstration. Twenty rounds were fired by one ANA soldier at a silhouette in controlled pairs, while 30 rounds were fired at a second silhouette by an AK-47 set on automatic. All 20 rounds fired in controlled pairs were on target, while only one round fired on automatic made it to the paper.

The Afghan soldiers' motivation and receptiveness to the training exceeded all expectations, said Nelson.

"We only asked for one company a day in the final three days, but they brought their whole battalion anyway because they all wanted to train. So we made it happen and I think we improved their marksmanship skills," said Nelson.

"Our higher purpose was to get their chain-of-command and junior leaders to be able to start similar training exercises on their own," said Nelson. "I hope we have that effect. I think we have, because toward the end of the exercise, we saw some of their own leaders teaching (other ANA soldiers) some of the things we were teaching them on the first day."



**An Afghan National Army soldier fires at a target during a basic rifle marksmanship class during Operation Atal Wali at Kandahar Airfield.**

Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

**From school, page 7**

said Rauf. "They are very nice things for our students to have."

The Soldiers were told after the mission that the school officials didn't expect them to bring anything, said Case.

"Not only did (the Soldiers) put in time and effort, they put in all the money too," said Case. "(This mission) has helped them gain an appreciation for the things they have."

"(This mission) definitely gave them a chance to get outside of (Bagram Airfield)," said Benedict.

"It's important to see how you're contributing to the lives of people less fortunate than we are. A lot of guys don't get that on base."



**Army Staff Sgt. William Ricks, (left) and other Soldiers work on the frame of a storm door the roof of the Charikar Girls' School.**

Photo by Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco, 20th Public Affairs Detachment



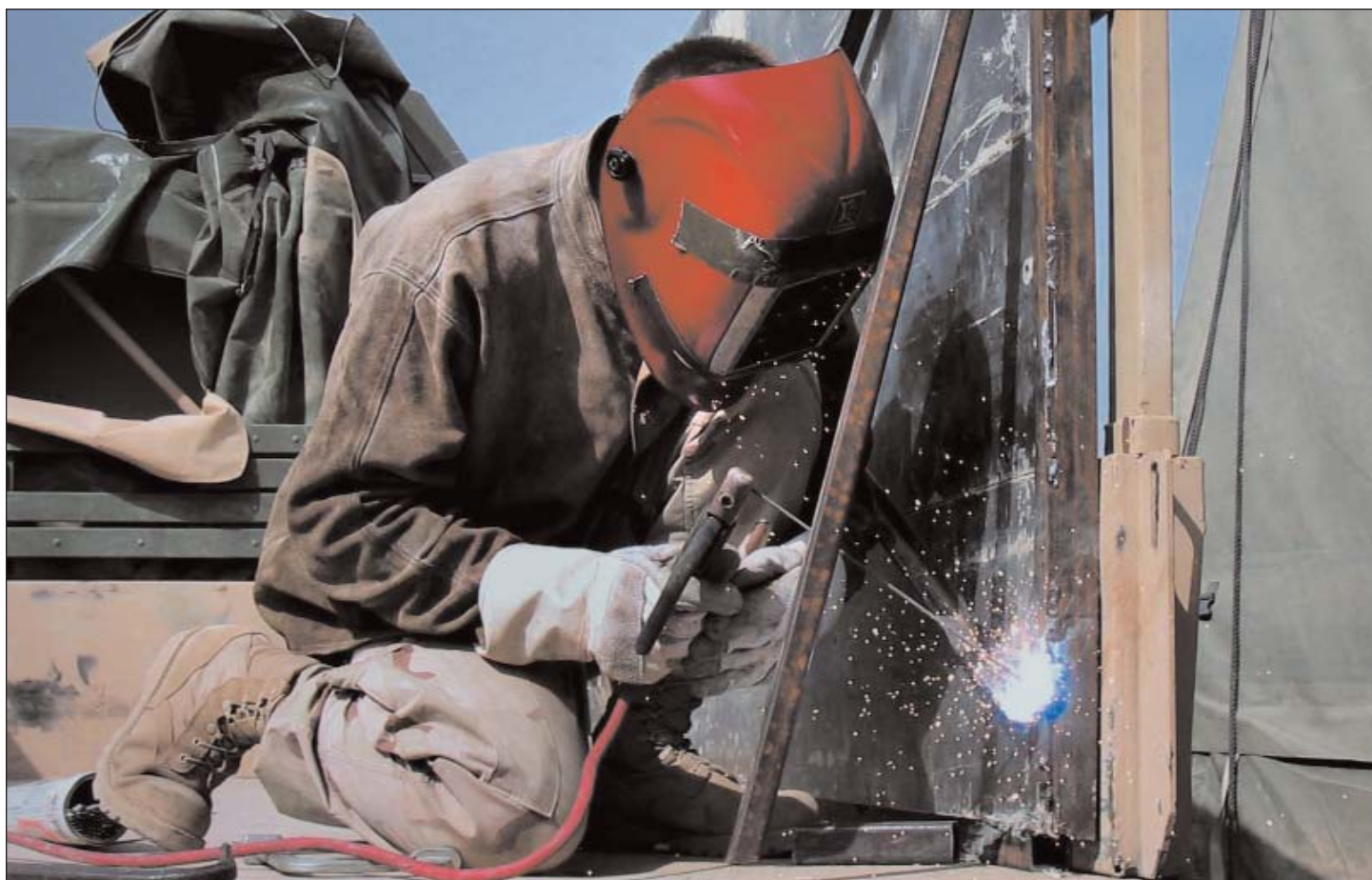


Photo by Army Spc. Laura E. Griffin

Army Sgt. Seth Nelson, a machinist with B Company, Logistical Task Force 307, welds some kevlar paneling onto an up-armored troop carrier Humvee at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

## Molding metal motivates machinist

By Army Spc. Laura E. Griffin  
Task Force Devil Public Affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan** - The spark that ignited Seth Nelson's passion for metalwork happened at a very young age.

"It all started when I was 8 years old," said the 21-year-old Army Sgt., a machinist with B Company, Logistical Task Force 307. "That was when I got my first motorcycle. When things started to break on it, I wanted to know why, and I wanted to know how I could fix it."

This passion and curiosity for how things work inspired him to make his very own forge in his parents' back yard, in which he melted a snowmobile engine.

"Once I had the metal melted, I thought to myself, 'now what am I going to do with this?'" he recalled. "I put it in one of my mother's cooking pots, something she was not really happy about

later, and left it in the forge while I dug a crescent moon shape into the sand to use as a mold. Once the metal had cooled in the mold, I polished it up and gave it to my girlfriend."

Then, at age 16, he bought his first welder and taught himself how to weld so he could replace the exhaust system on his pick-up truck and avoid the high cost of having someone else do the work for him. He used that welder over the next three years to build several go-carts.

Nelson joined the Army three years ago and continues to show his creativity and skill with metal while doing his job at Forward Operating Base Salerno. Here he makes things like tables, shelves and just about anything else that needs to be welded. He even made his own furniture for his room.

"The wooden furniture that I had was just too bulky," he said. "So I just made my own bunk bed and desk for my room.

I also made a lock box to keep my stuff in."

Some other things he's made include a dustpan using just tin snips and a hammer, a foot-shaped humvee gas pedal to replace a broken one, plaques for awards and even a guidon holder that he made out of two exhaust manifolds.

Besides welding, Nelson also manufactures engine parts for Humvees and other motorized vehicles on his metal lathe.

"Sometimes people will come in with a broken or worn out part and ask me to make a new one for them," he said. "The parts can usually be ordered, but sometimes they just can't get the replacements fast enough because of how long it takes to ship things out here."

Despite all the work he is doing here, Nelson says that he got most of his welding experience during his deployment to Iraq for Operation Iraqi

See Machinist, page 14

Andrew Natsios, administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Haji Bahlul, the governor of Panjshir Province, cut the ribbon officially opening the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team.



Photo by Army Sgt. Adrian Schulte, Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs



# New, civilian-led provincial reconstruction team stands up in Panjshir Province

**By Army Sgt. Adrian Schulte**

**Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs**

**PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** - Striking scenery and a storied history surround the team members of Afghanistan's newest provincial reconstruction team.

Located in the Panjshir valley, the former bastion of the famed Afghan Gen. Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Panjshir PRT takes a new and unique approach to civic assistance.

Afghanistan's 23rd PRT is the first to be led by a civilian, a State Department official.

"It's a prototype if you will, a pilot program," said Fletcher Burton, the PRT's director. "It's a prototype in that it is led by a civilian. It's also different in that we are trying to integrate the local officials into our day-to-day operations," he said. "We are somewhat smaller than the other PRTs. We have a somewhat smaller military footprint, but we still depend to a great extent on their support and it's great support from the U.S. military."

Twenty-three military personnel, five translators and three U.S. government officials from the State Department, Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development make up the PRT. While this is the core group, mentors from other U.S. agencies will be brought in to help the provisional government when needed.

The PRT was officially opened during a two-day event Nov. 15 and 16.

The commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force 76, Army Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya toured the PRT and visited Panjshir's governor, Haji Bahlul, to discuss the new organization.

"People are very happy and very optimistic when they see what is going on here," Bahlul told the general in their meeting.

"This is the way it is supposed to be where the U.S. Army supports the State Department," the general told the governor. "When the projects are finished, we want more than just the infrastructure. I ask the governor to look beyond the infrastructure because while these projects are being built, it's important that the people develop these talents on their own. As the roads are being built, we hope to raise a generation of Panjshiris who can build roads on their own."

The governor joined Kamiya at the PRT's safe house for a small ceremony in which they buried a time capsule which contained several items, including copies of American and Afghan newspapers, a near beer and Starbucks coffee drink. Kamiya topped the box off with a CJTF-76 commander's coin before the two leaders buried it.

The following day, the PRT was visited by the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and the top USAID representative. An official ribbon cutting ceremony made the organization official.

The PRT has a way to go before it is fully operational. Their living quarters are still being worked on, and the work

space will not be totally complete until next summer. But, while the members of the PRT may be roughing it for awhile, that will not deter them from their civic assistance missions.

"One of the key components (of what) we are trying to do is build capacity, build skills among the Afghans," said Army Maj. Christopher Granfield, commander of the Panjshir PRT's military contingent. "We are trying to build the capacity so that...in the future they will be able to build it themselves."

There are more than \$31 million worth of projects spread over 27 jobs, ranging from roads to micro-hydro projects that will bring power to small villages.

"Right now, we are focusing on some basic infrastructure projects including the road," said Burton. "Think of the transcontinental railroad in the U.S. It was a key infrastructure improvement in the 19th century. It was the ligament that tied the U.S. together. For us, the road here in the Panjshir will play a similar role. It too will have a critical infrastructure function of linking other sectors together and of connecting the province with the wider world."

The goal of the PRT is also to extend the reach of the central government into the province. Enhancing governance and rule of law, improving security, and progressing reconstruction and development are all top priorities of the PRT, according to Burton.

The Panjshir PRT is an offshoot of the Tri-Province PRT based out of Bagram Airfield. Whereas before, the troops would have to make a two-and-a-half hour drive from Bagram, limiting their presence in the area, they are now a permanent presence in the valley. While Burton admits they were initially met with some skepticism upon arriving in the area, he now says the local people are welcoming them with open arms.

"Panjshir is different; it has a different history from the rest of Afghanistan," he said. "The people have a different mentality. The ethnic group, Tajik, is different from the majority of the Afghans as well," said Burton. "It is a unique blend of circumstances and features. It is a great opportunity. We need to fit our PRT like a hand in a glove into the circumstances here. That is also the exciting part of the challenge."

This team and the other teams like it across the country, are battling the war on terror in their own way.

"The fight against terrorism is a series of fights," explained Burton. "We tend to view it collectively, but sometimes it's important to think of it in terms of individual regions or theaters. Afghanistan is a very important theater in the larger war against terrorism."

We need a stable Afghanistan, a moderate, modern, democratic representative government to help as a long-term partner on the fight against terrorism. That starts at the local level of course. My team and I are working at the provincial level. A stable modern Afghanistan would then be a very important feature in our foreign policy."

# Army chief presents awards for valor

**Story and photo**

**By Army News Service**

**FORT BENNING, Ga.** - Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker presented Army Rangers more than 25 awards for valor during a ceremony at Fort Benning, Ga., on Nov. 18.

The Soldiers, all assigned to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, deployed between July and October in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I am glad I could be here to recognize great heroes," said the Army chief. "I'm proud of your service. I am proud of what you do and what you represent. You are living the Ranger Creed and Warrior Ethos."

The Silver Star, awarded for gallantry in action, was presented to two Rangers for actions while deployed supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Capt. Christopher A. Molino was awarded the Silver Star while serving as the ground commander when his Soldiers were attacked. Molino was conducting combat operations when his element came under direct small-arms and hand-grenade fire from a determined enemy. According to the award citation, Molino's personal courage, tactical expertise and professional competence contributed to saving the lives of wounded Rangers and the success of the task force.

Staff Sgt. David M. Edwards was awarded the Silver Star while serving as a squad leader for the task force. Edwards' unit was conducting combat operations when his element came under an intense enemy attack. According to the citation, while under direct fire, his outstanding leadership, dedication to duty and commitment to excellence were fundamental in saving the life of a wounded Ranger and success of the task force.

"These men represent extraordinary heroism. They fought for each other, their families and to get the mission done," said Lt. Col. John G. Castles, commander, 3rd Bn., 75th Ranger Regt. "Their actions are representative of others on this field today.



**Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker congratulates Army Staff Sgt. David M. Edwards, 3rd Bn., 75th Ranger Regt., after presenting him with the Silver Star for his service during Operation Iraqi Freedom.**

"Rangers often downplay individual actions, because nothing can be done without the entire force."

He explained that the awardees' actions were significant and that "fellow Rangers are standing here today because of the valourous actions of these Rangers."

The Soldier's Medal was presented to Sgt. Mark T. Alperin while serving as a mortar platoon squad leader supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

This medal is awarded for personnel who distinguish themselves by heroism involving personal danger and the voluntary risk of life, though no contact with the enemy was made. This award requires the same level of heroism as the Distinguished Flying Cross.

According to the award citation, Alperin displayed the highest degree of professionalism, sound judgment, technical and tactical knowledge, and an overwhelming concern for the welfare of his Rangers. His performance and dedication to duty were contributing factors in saving a Ranger and success of the task force.

Bronze Star Medals for Valor were awarded to 11 Rangers for actions in supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

This medal is awarded for heroic actions. Awardees were: Sgt. 1st Class Andrew T. Bristow, Sgt. Jeremiah A. Dagel, Capt. John F. Detto, Sgt. Ian B. Hunter, 1st Lt. Ryan M. Kelly, Spc. Casey M. Loose, Staff Sgt. Joseph G. Lynch, 1st Sgt. Edward L. Noland, Staff Sgt. Michael N. Rach, Spc. Webster J. Slavens, and Staff Sgt. Jared N.

Van Aalst.

Loose said that he received this award with esteem and honor.

"It is my privilege to have served with the caliber of men such as those in my unit," he said. "I believe, however, that any one of my fellow Rangers would do, and have done, the very things that I received this award for.

"It is the Rangers' constant endeavor to live the Ranger Creed and exceed the standards," he explained. "That makes us who and what we are, especially on the battlefield."

Detto, the battalion physician's assistant and acting battalion surgeon, echoed the sentiments of teamwork and skill for which he and five of his medics, including Loose, received valorous awards.

He said that his men used their battlefield knowledge to prepare for the mission and then competently applied their training in accordance with the plan, allowing them to assist wounded Soldiers.

Ranger medics support missions on the front lines with their fellow Rangers, working together to accomplish the mission and bring everyone back.

"We would not have made it off of this objective and saved the injured men without the entire force fighting together," Loose said.

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Freedom III with F Company, 782nd Main Support Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division.

"Since we didn't have good armor on our Humvees yet, me and this other guy up-armored around 800 vehicles," he said. "We got the armor from Sweden and then just cut the pieces to fit what we needed."

There is no mistaking Nelson's love for what he does. One morning, after his unit had a six-mile run, they were told that they could show up an hour later for work. Nelson saw it as an opportunity to get some work done.

"This is my passion," Nelson said. "I could be out working all day long, come home and start something new."





Photo by Brannon Lamar, Joint Logistics Command Public Affairs

U.S. service members and contractors board an Air Force C-130 Hercules for their final departure from Karshi-Khanabad Air Base. Uzbekistan. Also known as K2, the base was a staging ground for Operation Enduring Freedom.

# U.S. forces pull out of K2

**By Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio**  
20th Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - U.S. forces pulled out of Karshi-Khanabad Airbase, Uzbekistan Nov. 21. Also known as K2, the air base supported the Operation Enduring Freedom mission in Afghanistan.

The final 90 U.S. troops flew out of Uzbekistan, ending four years at the facility.

"I think the hardest part in leaving is saying goodbye to the Uzbeks," said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Michael McLean, the senior enlisted Soldier in charge of the United States withdrawal in K2.

"They've been very supportive and very helpful," he said.

Relocation of U.S. military personnel and equipment to other parts of the region to support operations in Afghanistan had steadily taken place over several months, McLean said. Before the drawdown of troops, 1,400 Air Force and Army active, National Guard and Reserve components were stationed at the air base.

The command responsible for the move researched and compared the withdrawal to moving an entire town from Kansas City, Mo., to Springfield, Ill., in less than four months.

"A whole group of people have knocked themselves out to get this done, and it's been an absolute honor and pleasure to be a part of this team," McLean said.

The experience was something worth remembering, said Army Col. Patrick McKeever, the officer responsible for overseeing the troop withdrawal.

"It's been a fantastic experience," McKeever said. "This is what I call real integration. We've got National Guard, Army Reserve and the active component, both Air Force and Army, coming together to make an awesome team. These guys have put their heart and soul into getting out of here safely, and I couldn't be prouder of them.

I (told) Soldiers every day that it's something you might never do, again and it may be something you never want to do again, but either way, we learned a lot and accomplished the mission in an outstanding way."

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"It is war that shapes  
peace, and armament  
that shapes war."

- Thomas Fuller  
(Philosopher)

